DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 221 436 SO 014 261

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TITLE My Daddy Might Have Loved Me: Student Perceptions of Differences between Being Male and Being Female.
INSTITUTION Colorado Univ., Denver. Inst. for Equality in Education.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Sep 82
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Females; *Males; *Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Social Science Research; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Results of a survey of 3rd through 12th grade students illustrate that the majority perceive traditional sex roles as their only choice. The sample consisted of approximately 2,000 students in both large metropolitan districts and smaller rural districts throughout Colorado. Participants were asked to respond to a single question: If you woke up tomorrow and discovered that you were a (girl) (boy), how would your life be different? Several underlying themes emerged from the responses. For example, females learn that it is best not to work outside the home, but if one does, one should choose from a limited number of career options. They learn that their most valuable asset is their appearance and that they should be dependent, compliant, and fearful. Males are taught that females are to be treated as sex objects; that males should be independent, competitive, and aggressive; and that their activities are less restricted than females. Both sexes tend to avoid nontraditional courses and extracurricular activities. Educators interested in addressing these issues should contact committees organized under Title IX education amendments, parents' organizations, and sex equity teams. (KC)

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"MY DADDY MIGHT HAVE LOVED ME": STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BEING MALE AND BEING FEMALE

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September, 1982

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to several individuals who assisted in significant ways with the development and preparation of this report. Dr. Gretchen Groth and Sandra Hill of the Institute for Equality in Education gave continual support and encouragement, and unselfishly shared their personal insights which greatly enriched the interpretation of the data. Connie Waterhouse provided valuable assistance in the preparation of the manuscript.

Special thanks are also due to those participants of the Institute who collected the data and shared it for purposes of this report. I hope they will find this material useful in their continuing efforts towards providing equal opportunity for all students.

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The research on which this report is based was conducted under a Title IV grant from the U. S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education and no official endorsement of the Department of Education should be inferred.

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The Institute for Equality in Education is a Sex Desegregation Training Institute funded under a Title IV grant from the U. S. Department of Education. The purpose of the Institute is to provide training in sex equity to personnel in Colorado school districts.

Institute for Equality in Education

"MY DADDY MIGHT HAVE LOVED ME": STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BEING MALE AND BEING FEMALE

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Educators are quick to acknowledge that students are unique individuals and should be treated as such in the classroom. Paradoxically, however, these same persons often show remarkably little concern for the differential treatment of students on the basis of sex. The stereotyping which is reflected in that differential treatment is based on the assumption that all persons of a particular sex are alike -- that they have the same values, the same interests and abilities, and the same levels of aspiration. It further assumes that all males and all females will become members of a family in which the father works outside of the home and the mother stays home and raises the children. Obviously, such assumptions are invalid. Yet even those educators who are most concerned about sex discrimination may be unaware of how their own behavior differentiates between males and females with the cumulative effect of damaging individuals and ultimately the process of education.

It would be reasonable to expect that sex discrimination in the public schools has been dramatically reduced in the ten years since the passage of Title IX. This law states that "No person. . . shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance . . . ." While school districts have taken certain important actions required by the law, the emphasis has been on those areas where the results are highly visible and easily verifiable -- such as integrating physical education classes, replacing sex-biased testing and counseling materials, and providing programs for pregnant and married students. The more difficult task of addressing differential treatment of students in the classroom has received much less attention.

The failure to provide staff development programs related to sex equity is often justified by claims that such training is unnecessary because a district is already in compliance with Title IX. One measure which districts frequently cite as evidence of their compliance is the fact that few, if any, students have filed grievances charging sex discrimination. Use of this measure makes two assumptions: first, that students have been instructed on the purpose and use of the grievance procedures; and second, that students will use a grievance procedure even though they have been socialized to view discriminatory policies and practices as "normal" and therefore acceptable. In reality, the number of grievances filed says more about the level of student awareness of sex equity issues than it does about district compliance with Title IX or commitment to sex equity.

Unlike other staff development programs which districts consider essential for all district personnel, training related to sex equity is more often voluntary than mandatory. Although this practice may protect administrators from the hostility of resistant staff members, it also creates or reinforces attitudes that sex equity is unimportant, while increasing the likelihood that differential treatment of students in violation of Title IX will continue.

Much of the differential treatment which occurs is less the result of malicious intent than the fact that teachers, like their students, have been socialized to accept traditional sex roles. Maximizing educational opportunity for all students depends, therefore, on two forms of intervention: (1) making teachers and other school personnel aware of the damaging effects of their differential treatment of male and female students; and (2) making students aware of the damaging effects of conformity to traditional sex role stereotypes.

Educators who doubt that such intervention is critical need only listen to what students say when they are asked to identify differences between being male and being female. Participants in the Institute for Equality in Education recently conducted a survey which asked students to respond to a single question: "If you woke up tomorrow and discovered that you were a (boy) (girl), how would your life be different?" The students surveyed included approximately 2000 students in 3rd through 12th grade in both large, metropolitan districts and smaller, rural districts through Colorado.

Given the many claims that male and female sex roles are changing, it is astounding how few students indicated that they do not feel personally bound to conform to the stereotypical male or female role. Those who did reject the traditional stereotypes felt that being male or female would have little impact on either their behavior or their aspirations. Yet even these students were aware that redefinition of sex roles to allow for greater individuality results in increased advantages for both sexes, but primarily for females.

The responses from the overwhelming majority of students confirm that, as a result of sex role socialization, students see traditional sex roles as their only choice. Consequently, these students believe that their lives would change dramatically if their sex were different. The underlying themes which emerge from their descriptions of those changes highlight the damaging effects of sex role socialization.

Effect #1 - Females learn that it is best not to work outside the home, but if one does, one should choose from a limited number of career options.

One area which the students frequently identified as a difference between being male and being female was that of career choice. Their comments showed the effects of being taught that males are to be the primary, if not the only, source of income for their families, while females are to work inside the home and depend on a husband for their support. "If I were a girl," wrote one tenth-grade boy, "I would be expected by some to get married rather than pursue a career." Other boys expressed the same opinion: "I would almost have to change career plans. I would probably consider being a housewife." "I would start to look for a husband as soon as I got into high school." One fourth-grade girl explained the difference between being male and being female in this way: "My goal as a girl is to be nothing."

The reality is that 90% of girls in high school today can expect to be part of the labor force for an average of 25 years if they marry, and an average of

45 years if they don't. Furthermore, 66% of women who are currently employed are either the sole support for themselves and their families, or are the major wage earner.

For women who do choose to work outside the home, conformity with traditional sex roles means ignoring those careers which are traditionally held by males. Consequently, it means having fewer choices. The composite list of careers identified by students as being "appropriate" for males included significantly more options than did the corresponding list for females. In fact, females do select from a very limited number of careers, with 60% of working women currently choosing to be clerks, salespersons, waitresses, and hairdressers.

Because sex role socialization teaches females to see careers as less important for themselves than for males, girls tend either not to prepare for a career at all, or to choose careers which are considered "appropriate" for females. When females choose careers which are consistent with the traditional female role, they pay the price of another damaging effect of sex role socialization.

Effect #2 - Females are taught to select careers which are less rewarding than those which males are taught to select.

Traditionally, careers tend to be defined as either "male" or "female," depending on whether the work involved is consistent with the male or female sex role stereotype. For example, careers which involve giving orders, being in charge, and working independently are considered to be "male". Careers which involve following other's directions, serving or caring for others, and providing support are considered to be "female". One means of determining whether a career is non-traditional for males or females is to note whether a person's sex is identified when the career is referred to; for example, "male nurse," "female pilot," "male secretary," "female carpenter."

When the students specified career choices, they conformed strictly to traditional distinctions between "male" and "female" careers. The careers specified by girls as those they would consider if they were male included: mechanic, construction worker, pilot, engineer, race car driver, forest ranger, dentist, steelworker, architect, stunt man, coal miner, geologist, farmer, sports commentator, draftsman, and banker. The career mentioned most frequently was professional athlete. The options listed most frequently by boys were: secretary, housewife, and nurse. Other careers seen by the boys as being available choices if they were female included: cocktail waitress, social worker, teacher, stewardess, interior decorator, child care assistant, receptionist, model, beauty queen, and prostitute. The only careers seen as possible choices for both sexes were: truck driver, computer programmer, doctor, and lawyer -- none of which is a traditionally female profession. Consequently, the career choices suggest a preference for "maleness" by both the boys and the girls.

Girls pointed out that they would have more or different options if they were male: "I'd have different opportunities in jobs" (8th grade girl). "I could run for President" (10th grade girl). "I want to be a nurse, but if I were male, I would probably want to be an architect" (4th grade girl). "I would consider careers in math or science (10th grade girl). On the other hand, boys felt they would lose options if they were female: "I wouldn't be able to keep my job as a carpenter" (12th grade boy). "I couldn't be a mechanic" (8th grade boy).

Career choice is important, not only as a source of income, but also as a source for feelings of self-worth. When one compares the choices made by boys with those made by girls, it is apparent that their choices were based on the perception that conformity to traditional sex roles dictates the careers which one considers as possible. It is also not difficult to determine which careers carry rewards of higher income and contribute to greater feelings of self-worth.

In 1981, thirteen of the top twenty highest paying careers required a background in math and/or science. It has been estimated that 80% of the careers in the 1980's will require a strong background in math. But if females perceive that they are expected to become homemakers or to select "female" careers, there is no motivation for them to take those classes which will prepare them for more responsible, higher paying careers. An eleventh-grade girl explained how parents influence career choice, and consequently earning power, by expecting their children to conform to traditional sex roles: "If I was a boy, I'd drop my typing class and start taking really hard classes, since my Dad would let me go to college and he won't now." Unfortunately, this student is anything but unique. Of all high school students who are eligible for college but do not go, 75% are female. Although females earn much better high school grades than males, they are less likely to believe they have the ability to do college work.

The expectation that males should be the primary breadwinners and that woman's place is in the home also creates the perception that jobs which females traditionally hold outside the home are less important than those held by males. An eleventh-grade boy showed his disdain for one traditionally female occupation when he wrote: "I would refuse to work as a secretary or something stupid like that." As a result of such perceptions, "female" jobs typically command lower salaries. Both boys and girls recognize this distinction: "It would be harder [as a female] to get a job and I probably would be paid less" (11th grade boy). "If I were a boy, I would be treated better. I would get paid more and be able to do more things" (4th grade girl). The effect of "female" careers being less valued than "male" careers is that when a wife works, she and her husband bring home 1½ paychecks instead of two. In addition, women who are responsible for supporting families often must hold multiple jobs, and working women in general are not given the respect which males typically experience.

One avenue that females utilize to increase their earning power is the selection of non-traditional careers. There is evidence that more women are making such choices, although the total number is relatively small. It is not surprising, however, that females would choose that option more often than males, considering the comparative rewards of traditional male careers and traditional female careers. What is not commonly known is that females are paid less than males regardless of the career they choose. According to the latest statistics from the Department of Labor, the median weekly salary for women working full-time is less than that for men in <u>every</u> occupational category for which data were available. Consequently, choosing a non-traditional category is no guarantee that a female's salary will be equal to that of a male, in spite of the requirements of the Equal Pay Act.

As can be seen by the career choices listed by the students, the majority of traditionally female careers not only involve serving or caring for others. In addition, many of those careers require that the female be physically attractive. This emphasis on a female's appearance is consistent with the traditional expectation that a female's role is to please males. Consequently, sex role

socialization includes teaching our children that physical attractiveness is particularly important for females. This, in turn, has yet another damaging effect.

Effect #3 - Females are taught that their most valuable asset is their appearance.

The amount of attention one gives to one's appearance was another area frequently mentioned by the students as a difference between being male and being female. Boys often commented about having to "curl my hair and put on make-up" if they became girls. An eighth-grade boy said: "I couldn't be a slob anymore. I'd have to smell pretty." One sixth-grade boy stated with alarm: "I'd have to shave my whole body!"

Girls were equally as aware of the difference: "If I were a boy, I wouldn't have to be neat," wrote a fourth-grader. "I wouldn't have to worry how I look," said a sixth-grader. A tenth-grade girl pointed out what she felt was the major advantage of being male: "If I woke up tomorrow and I was a boy . . . I would go back to bed since it would not take me very long to get ready for school."

Such statements suggest that both boys and girls feel it is imperative that a female do everything she can to be attractive. Indeed, women spend millions of dollars annually trying to conform to an ever-illusive definition of female beauty. In addition, both boys and girls recognized that a male's appearance is relatively unimportant. Several boys emphasized that if they had to be female, the only way they could tolerate the change would be if they could be particularly beautiful. On the other hand, not a single girl said that if she had to be male, she wanted to be particularly handsome.

The reason for all this concern with females' appearance is directly related to the traditional female stereotype. Being "feminine" is to a large degree a matter of being physically attractive. Males are given the right to judge whether or not a female measures up to a particular standard. If she does, she may be rewarded by being chosen by a male as his partner. Being chosen is one of the few ways a female has of being validated. An interesting practice which highlights the value which females put on being chosen is that of the bride who buys and carefully preserves her wedding gown, while the groom rents his attire and returns it to the store after the wedding. The sad irony is that being chosen for one's appearance does not mean one is valued as a person. It merely puts one in a class with other beautiful objects -- to be admired, but also to be depersonalized.

The differential amount of attention which females must pay to their appearance leads to the next damaging effect of sex role socialization.

Effect #4 - Males are taught that females are to be treated as sex objects; females are taught that such treatment is normal.

Boys and girls both made references to the fact that females are often treated as sex objects. A twelfth-grade boy wrote: [As a girl,] I would use a lot of make-up and look good and beautiful to everyone, knowing that few people would care for my personality, and the majority of people would like to have me just like a sexual object." An eleventh-grade boy agreed that he would be "treated like a sex symbol" if he became a girl. Another senior boy remarked:

"If I were gorgeous, I would be jeered at, and hear plenty of comments." Even elementary students recognized what females are subjected to: "I'd have to watch out for boys making passes at me" (3rd grade boy).

Girls also commented on males' treatment of females. One eleventh-grader recognized that if she were male she would no longer have to experience "leers while walking down the street". A sixth-grade girl felt that as a boy she would have to "put down all the girls". One girl, however, suggested she would ignore the expectation to treat females in a negative way: "I wouldn't treat chicks like most guys treated me, because I know how it feels."

References to treatment of females often included references to violence against women. Boys made statements such as "[If I were a girl,] I'd have to know how to handle drunk guys and rapists" (8th grade boy). "I would have to be around other girls for safety" (11th grade boy). "I would always carry a gun for protection" (4th grade boy). Girls frequently mentioned that if they were boys they would not have to worry about being raped.

Contrary to what many persons believe, it is not female behavior which is responsible for the violence which males direct towards females. It is, rather, the result of how males are socialized to conform to traditional sex roles. That socialization process is the subject of another damaging effect of sex role socialization which is apparent from the students' responses.

Effect #5 - Males are taught to be independent, competitive, aggressive, and to use violence.

These learnings, which are part of the traditional male sex role, begin in infancy. Boy babies are handled more roughly by their parents. They are given toys such as trucks, sports equipment, and guns and are allowed more opportunities to explore and experiment. As a result, their behavior becomes more independent, risk-taking, and competitive.

Along with being more active, boys become more aggressive. When describing how their behavior would change if they became boys, girls indicated they would have to be "rowdy," "macho," "smart-alecky," "noisy," and "say disgusting things." An eleventh-grade girl commented: "If I acted [as a boy] like I do now, I wouldn't be accepted. I'd probably need to start cussing and do other things like that to fit in." They recognized it was important for boys not to be a "sissy" and to be polite to girls (although the treatment of females they described could hardly be considered "polite"). Some mentioned they would have to be more active and "show off more."

Part of being more aggressive is preferring the use of physical strength to resolve conflicts. Males are expected to be able to prove their manliness by physically defeating any challenger. Such displays are encouraged in young boys with statements such as "If he hit you, hit him back."

In the students' comments, violence was associated only with being male. One sixth-grade girl stated that if she were a boy, she could "beat up people." An eighth-grade girl made this alarming remark which demonstrates the difference between how males and females are socialized to solve problems: "If I were a boy, I'd kill my art teacher, instead of arguing with him as I do now." Because females make easy targets, they are all too often the victims of expressions of male violence. Although estimates vary, at least one out of every four females

is subjected to physical battering from a male partner, and one out of every three is the victim of either rape, battering, or incest.

Consistent with the expectation that they be strong and aggressive, males are taught to show less affection and emotion than females. The girls surveyed were sensitive to the pressures put on boys to conform to this stereotype. A tenth-grader wrote: "I would have to stay calm and cool whenever something happened."

Some students recognized that conformity to the male stereotype is not without its costs. In imagining how their lives would change if they became girls, boys occasionally expressed a sense of relief at the prospect of being relieved of pressures they felt from being male: "I wouldn't have to worry about responsibilities." "I wouldn't have to be scared of a fight." I could ride girls' bikes and not be laughed at. And no one would make fun of me because I'm afraid of frogs." An eleventh-grade girl pointed out that as a boy, she "would not be allowed to express my true feelings." It is obvious from the other comments made that boys are free to be boisterous and loud. Therefore, one can assume that the feelings which are not allowed, which is consistent with the male stereotype, are those "softer" feelings associated with females.

The process of socializing girls to conform to the traditional female sex role has equally damaging effects.

Effect #6 - Females are taught to be dependent, compliant, and fearful.

The treatment which little girls receive from their parents is almost the direct opposite of that which little boys receive. Little girls are encouraged to be nurturers by being given dolls. As they grow older, they are kept close to adults. They spend more time indoors where they are denied the experiences which make boys more self-reliant. They are more often warned about danger and about hurting themselves, so they become fearful, have less self-confidence, and avoid taking risks. As a tenth-grade girl described it: [If I were a boy,] I think I would be more outspoken and confident, but I really don't know why."

In general, the comments which boys made in the survey reflected the stereotypic expectation that girls are not to be as active as boys: "Instead of wrestling with my friends, I'd be sitting around discussing the daily gossip." "My definition of a good time would definitely change." "I would become less outgoing and more polite. I may become shy, and be looked upon as a fragile glass doll." "I would play girl games and not have many things to do during the day." "I would have to hate snakes. Everything would be miserable." "I couldn't climb trees or jump the creek."

In contrast to the behaviors mentioned by girls, boys felt that as females they would have to be "nicer, and say proper things". They also mentioned they would have to be "so dainty," "goodie-goodie," "nice and neat," "kind, cute, and have nice handwriting," "more polite," "like a lady". A tenth-grade boy said he would have to be "more quiet, more reserved, and wait for others to talk to me first."

The combination of requirements associated with the traditional female sex role can create a double-bind for many girls. On the one hand they are expected to be sweet and polite, and on the other hand they are expected to be pleasing to males. Often what males require from females in order that the males may be pleased is the granting of sexual favors. One ninth-grade boy showed remarkable

sensitivity to this contradiction: "If I were a girl, I'd have to be lady-like and trampish."

Out of the process of teaching males how to be "masculine" and teaching females how to be "feminine," a tragic irony develops. Females are taught that being weak and vulnerable is part of being "feminine," and that males will be their protectors. Thus when male aggression turns to violence against females, the female is unprepared to defend herself, and may even blame herself for her "protector's" behavior. Or, if she recognizes she is a potential victim simply by being female, she takes on the stressful task of continually monitoring her environment to reduce the possibility of being attacked.

Effect #7 - Males are taught to expect freedom; females are taught to expect restrictions.

Girls reported a wide range of freedoms they believed they would have as males which they do not have as females. Typical comments were: "I could stay our later." "There would be fewer rules." "I could do more." "I'd have more independence." "I'd be trusted more when driving." "I could pick my own friends." A fourth-grader summed it up: "Obviously males are allowed to do more than females."

Without exception, the girls associated being male with being free from restrictions. Indeed, they failed to identify even a single restriction they would be subject to if they became male. From the boys' comments, it was apparent that they associated being female with being restricted: "I'd have to come in earlier." "I couldn't go out as much." "I couldn't throw spit wads." "I couldn't play football or basketball." "I couldn't have a pocket knife."

The imposition of restrictions on females is an extension of the practice of keeping females close to adults and protecting them from real or imagined harms. Since males are expected to be self-reliant, it would be considered inappropriate to set limits on their activities. The result is that males have greater opportunity to develop skills necessary to be an independent, self-sufficient adult, while females are encouraged to rely on others for guidance and support. This learning is not entirely without its benefits for females, however. Females tend to form closer friendships than do males, and they are more likely to be cooperative than competitive in their relationships and activities.

Sex role socialization also has damaging effects related to the home and relationships with one's children.

Effect #8 - Males and females are taught that home and childcare responsibilities are not to be shared equally.

The resistance which males often have to sharing home responsibilities and childcare is tied to the stereotypical definition of "masculinity". Being "masculine" depends to a large degree on not being identified with anything "feminine". This includes doing only those tasks in the home which males typically do, and interacting with one's children only in ways which are "appropriate" for males.

With the increasing number of women who work outside the home, the traditional expectation that housework and childcare are primarily "women's work" means that a female often finds that her career responsibilities are simply added on to her home responsibilities.

When parents themselves conform to traditional sex roles, they tend to perpetuate this pattern by assigning household duties to their children on the basis of the child's sex. When asked to identify differences which would occur if their sex were different, many student comments related to changes in required duties at home. Boys pointed out that they would be expected to do more housework if they were female. A fourth-grade girl made this remark about how her life would change if she were male: "Life on the home front would be a lot easier. I know that for a fact since I've got a brother." It was evident that these children (and their parents) draw clear distinctions between duties which are appropriate for males and those which are appropriate for females: "If I were a girl, I would dust the house instead of vacuuming" (4th grade boy). "If I were a boy, I would take out the garbage instead of doing the ironing" (12th grade girl).

Childcare was consistently viewed as being the female's responsibility. One sixth-grade girl said: "If I were a boy, I wouldn't have to babysit." An eighth-grade boy acknowledged that if he were female, he would be "the one who has the kid." A sixth-grade girl recognized that childcare can have its drawbacks. She commented that if she were male, she "would not have to put up with the kids."

While leaving childcare to females undoubtedly has its advantages for males, it also deprives them of experiencing the positive rewards which females gain from their role as nurturers. Conformity to traditional sex roles has still other implications for parents' relationships with their children. This is demonstrated in the next damaging effect of sex role socialization.

Effect #9 - Males and females are taught only those skills which are consistent with traditional sex roles.

Traditional sex roles dictate that, in general, fathers should share their activities with their sons, and mothers should share their activities with their daughters. This expectation is applied not only to household tasks, but to other activities as well. Students of both sexes recognized that fathers involve their sons in activities from which daughters are excluded: "If I were a girl, I would not help my dad wash the car or gas up the car" (4th grade boy). "If I were a boy, I could go hunting and fishing with my dad" (6th grade girl). "If I were a girl, I would not be able to help my dad fix the car and truck and his two motorcycles" (6th grade boy). "If I were a boy, my dad would do more things, like teach me how to work with wood" (6th grade girl).

It is obvious from such comments that both boys and girls value these traditionally male activities and want to share them with their fathers. The traditionally female activities such as cooking and sewing, which mothers typically perform, were rarely mentioned. When they were, students viewed them as undesirable. Consequently, conformity to traditional sex roles results in denying both sons and daughters the opportunity to learn important skills and to develop interests and talents which are not consistent with those roles.

The process of sex role socialization begun in the home is reinforced in the classroom. Since the passage of Title IX in 1972, sex discrimination in education has been illegal. Even so, the positive impact of this legislation has been offset by the conscious or unconscious reinforcement of sex role stereotypes by counselors, teachers, and other school personnel who often fail to make students aware of the damaging effects of making stereotypical choices.

Effect #10 - Males and females exclude themselves from courses and extracurricular activities in school that develop interests and talents which are valuable to both sexes.

The selection of courses and activities in school has important implications for one's future. Career choice is influenced, interests and talents are developed, and important skills for everyday living are learned. Even though schools are now required to make all courses and most activities available to all students, student selections continue to reflect conformity to traditional sex role stereotypes. Students who participated in the survey still see auto mechanics, computer classes, math and science as being more appropriate for males than for females. Cooking, sewing, and particularly typing were identified as "girls' classes". One senior boy answered the survey question this way: "I would drop my math class and take more classes like cooking, English and ones that would make me look good as a girl." A tenth-grade boy agreed: "I would not want to take all of the math and science courses that I am taking now. I would take mostly art, food, and clothing classes." Similarly, the girls felt they would have to make changes in course selection if they were male: "I'd have to drop my sewing class" (11th grade girl). "I would take classes like drafting and woodshop, and I couldn't take Home Economics" (11th grade girl).

In general, more females than males elect to take non-traditional courses. When they do, however, they are often regarded as "freaks," or their motives are questioned. For example, in one school district, an administrator commented that girls rarely elect to take traditionally male vocational education classes. He went on to relate the case of one girl who took auto mechanics "but only because she wanted to be with the boys." He implied that she had little interest in learning the skills taught. The fact that she had earned an excellent grade in the course was completely ignored. Such attitudes are evident to students, even when not expressed overtly, and have the effect of discouraging selection of non-traditional courses.

Extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs were similarly identified by the students surveyed as being either for boys or for girls. Far more of these activities were mentioned as being appropriate for boys; for example, basketball, track, baseball, wrestling, weight lifting, chess club, and computer club. Volleyball and gymnastics were seen as being primarily for girls.

In the survey, girls often referred to negative reactions they receive when they do choose to engage in "male" activities: "[If I were a boy,] I could play baseball or go hunting without being hassled." "I would be able to take shop without feeling out of place." "I could use the weight room without feeling funny." "I could play football without being laughed at."

An overwhelming number of girls indicated they would go out for football if they were male, and an equally large number of boys said they would want to be cheerleaders if they were female. The selection by the girls of football as an important activity for males is not surprising. More than any other activity, playing football epitomizes "masculinity" and the advantages of being male. Football players have their uniforms furnished free of charge; cheerleaders usually must furnish their own. Football players are given free transportation to games and free meals afterwards; cheerleaders usually must find their own rides and pay for their own meals. Football players are rewarded with trophies and scholarships and have their pictures hung in a place of honor at school. Cheerleaders are rewarded with a small gold-plated megaphone to wear on a necklace or bracelet.

To understand why the boys in the survey showed an interest in being cheerleaders, one must recognize what cheerleading represents to females. Although its advantages are few when compared to those of being a male athlete, cheerleading is one of the few opportunities for young females to be physically active without losing their "femininity," and at the same to be validated as popular and attractive.

The mention of football and cheerleading is also significant as evidence that the students have been socialized to conform to traditional sex roles. There are few other activities which capture so clearly the essence of the traditional male and female sex roles. The football player is physically strong, competitive and aggressive. His place is on the playing field, performing the activity considered to be important. The cheerleader's place is on the sidelines, providing support for the males and pleasing them by being physically attractive and energetically loyal. As one fourth-grade boy stated: "When you're a girl, you cheer sports instead of joining them." The cheerleaders' function has meaning only in relation to the athlete -- one can certainly play football without having cheerleaders, but a cheerleader without football players is considered absurd.

Although opportunities for females in sports have definitely increased in recent years, it took a federal law to make it happen. And as one senior boy in the survey noted, female sports receive less support than do male sports: "If I were a [female] athlete, I'd expect fewer people to come to the event." The lower attendance at girls' sporting events lets females know that their activities are less important than those of males. This, in turn, serves to discourage females from engaging in athletic activities.

Effect #11 - Females receive better treatment from teachers, but males get more encouragement to achieve.

Male students learn that their aggressive behavior, which is reinforced in their other activities, is unacceptable in the classroom. Because they are more aggressive, males receive far more reprimands from teachers than do females. To the students in the survey, this differential treatment is often experienced as inequity: "[If I were a boy,] I'd be treated unfairly" (4th grade girl). "I'd get away with a lot less" (11th grade girl). "The best thing about [being a girl] is that the teacher would favor you" (6th grade boy). "If I were a girl, I would be treated like a normal human being, not an animal or anything else" (8th grade boy). "As a boy, I would be treated with less respect" (10th grade girl).

The students also perceived that individual teachers show definite preferences for either male or female students. One tenth-grade girl thought that the way she would be treated as a boy would depend on the sex of the teacher: "If it were a lady teacher, I would get more attention. If it were a man, I would more than likely get yelled at more." An eleventh-grade girl felt that the differences were not so predictable: "Depending on the teacher, I might be treated as dirt [as a boy], or I might be shown that someone cares how I do in school."

Even though males may get into more trouble at school, teacher reprimands have the positive effect of making males the center of attention. Few females are aware of this, although one girl said: "If I were a boy, I'd get called on more to answer questions." The more frequent interaction which teachers have with boys gives the boys constant feedback and makes them feel important. The quieter

behavior of girls is rewarded with higher grades and special privileges such as running errands for the teacher. But it also means that girls are more often ignored.

A dramatic example of how teachers ignore females was reported by one of the teachers who administered the student survey. She was collecting data on the number of females enrolled in advanced math and science classes at her high school. A math teacher insisted that there were more males than females in his advanced math class. Yet when he checked his grade book, he was amazed to discover that in fact the opposite was true.

The costs of being reprimanded more often are also outweighed by the fact that males receive more encouragement to achieve. A number of students addressed what they perceived to be differences in teachers' expectations of achievement: A sixth-grade girl said: "If I were a boy, I might have done better in school." A ninth-grade girl commented that as a boy, she "might be expected to be more intelligent than the girls." An eleventh-grade girl agreed: "Teachers expect more from guys." Imagining herself as a boy, an eleventh-grade girl said: "I would probably act different toward my teachers, being less cutesy and vulnerable. Boys have to make it on their own." Remarks such as these are consistent with research on female achievement. Although females tend to perform equal to or better than males in elementary school, by the age of 13, females' achievement begins to decline. By adulthood, males outperform females in everything but writing and music. This can be explained by the lower expectations which are part of the traditional female stereotype. As females begin to realize that their appearance and their docile behavior are rewarded much more than their grades, they reduce their effort to conform to the level of other's expectations.

Effect #12 - Both males and females are taught that being male is inherently better than being female.

Perhaps the most disturbing theme which consistently appeared in the responses to the student survey was the implication that males are inherently of greater value than females. Many of the damaging effects already identified are consistent with this same theme.

Even though an occasional female would state that she did not want to be a boy, or that being a girl is "more fun," by far the greater number of comments which denigrated the opposite sex were written by boys. Elementary boys often selected titles for their responses using phrases such as "The Disaster," or "The Fatal Dream," or "Doomsday."

The negative remarks directed against females represented a wide range: "Girls can't do anything fun. They don't know how to do anything except play dolls" (4th grade boy). "I wouldn't like having a little pink dress or anything about a girl. It wouldn't be fun" (4th grade boy). "If I were a girl, I would have to wear make-up, cook, be a mother, and yuccky stuff like that" (6th grade boy). "If I were a girl, I'd be stupid and weak as a string" (6th grade boy). "If I woke up and I was a girl, I would go back to sleep and hope it was a bad dream" (6th grade boy). "If I were a girl, I would want to be a boy" (4th grade boy). "If I were a girl, everybody would be better than me, because boys are better than girls" (3rd grade boy). Many of the comments were more succinct: "If I were a girl, I'd kill myself." Some child development experts would argue that elementary school age children exhibit a pattern of preferring to interact with their own sex, and negative remarks about females would be attributed to the developmental stage of the child. It is unclear, however, whether this behavior

is acutally developmental, or the result of sex role socialization which continually reinforces such interaction. Although high school boys made very few statements which were direct putdowns of females, none of the boys expressed a preference for being a girl.

On the other hand, girls frequently saw being male as being a definite advantage: "I probably wouldn't get nervous when I talk" (6th grade girl). "I could do stuff better than I do now" (3rd grade girl). "People would take my decisions and beliefs more seriously (11th grade girl). "I wouldn't have to worry about getting a reputation (8th grade girl). "If I were a boy, my whole life might have been easier" (6th grade girl).

Girls also seemed to be particularly aware of how their relationships with their parents - and especially their fathers - would change if they were male. "My dad would respect me better than usual because I would be a boy," wrote one fourth-grade girl. She continued: "My grandparents would treat me extra special." The preference parents often have for male children, particularly as the first child, is reflected in this statement by a sixth-grade girl: "If I were a boy, my father would be closer because I'd be the son he always wanted." Perhaps the most poignant comment is that of a third-grade girl who wrote: "If I were a boy, my Daddy might have loved me." In a 1978 study, twice as many women expressed a preference for male children, and their husbands preferred males to females by as much as three or four to one. These preferences get passed on to children, as is evident in this remark by a third-grade girl: "I would get married and probably want to have children. I would surely want a son more than a girl."

The Educator's Responsibility

As has been demonstrated in the student comments reported here, the consequences resulting from sex role socialization are as insidious as they are unnecessary. And while it has been shown that males surely pay a price by conforming to traditional sex roles, the price which females pay is even greater. As a group, females will suffer more anxieties, have less self-confidence, and have lower life aspirations when they grow up. But perhaps worst of all, they are denied the experience of feeling they are valued and valuable.

One third-grade boy described in this way his perceptions of what it's like to be a female: "If I woke up and I was a girl, I would like to blow bubbles all the time, and like to play with dolls and doll houses. I would like pink and I would like ribbons and pigtails. I would always chase boys. I would like girl teachers better, and I would not collect rocks anymore. I would be quieter and I'd take a bath in perfume mixed with bubble bath. I wouldn't like being a girl."

When confronted with proof of students' conformity of sex role stereotypes and the damaging effects of such conformity, educators often claim that intervention is the responsibility of parents, not the schools. Surely it is not for schools alone to assume responsibility for breaking down these stereotypes and how they limit both sexes. But neither can the schools pass off this responsibility to other parties. Students spend a critical portion of their days in public school classrooms, and the quality of that time is significant not only in terms of intellectual growth, but also social development. If one accepts the position that it is the responsibility of educators to maximize educational opportunity for <u>all</u> students, it is critical for parents and teachers to work together to understand the damaging effects of sex role stereotypes and to

counteract those effects by intervening when evidence of stereotyping is found.

Because of the pressures on young people to conform to sex role stereotypes, school districts are obligated by Title IX to go beyond such basic actions as allowing students of both sexes to take all courses or eliminating differential discipline policies. If all students are to have equal educational opportunity, schools must also direct address issues of sex role stereotyping in teacher behavior and classroom materials. Without such efforts, it can be expected that students will continue to make the choices dictated by those stereotypes and, as a result, will continue to experience the limitations associated with those choices.

What Educators Can Do

If you are concerned about what your district is doing to address issues related to Title IX and sex equity, the following actions are ways of acting on those concerns:

1. Ask your students the same question which was asked in the student survey reported in this article and discuss their answers with them, pointing out the damaging effects of sex role stereotypes.

2. Familiarize yourself with the Title IX regulations. An excellent summary is available from PEER, 1029 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20005.

3. Talk to your district's Title IX Coordinator and other administrators about actions being taken to address these issues. Ask for evidence of compliance with Title IX and commitment to sex equity.

4. Investigate the opportunities for staff development in the area of sex equity, and take advantage of them. If none are available, ask for such programs to be offered.

5. Review your textbooks and other classroom materials for evidence of sexism. Although not covered by Title IX, textbooks are recognized as significant influences on the development and perpetuation of sex role stereotypes. Your local chapter of NOW can provide helpful information about what to look for.

6. Contact your district's Title IX committee or individuals who have participated in training offered by the Institute for Equality in Education. (These names are available from your Title IX Coordinator). Share your concerns with these individuals and ask how you can cooperate with their efforts.

7. Suggest that your school's parent organization make sex equity a priority and that they provide speakers and programs to raise parents' awareness of the damaging effects of sex role stereotyping.

8. Contact the Sex Equity Team at the Colorado State Department of Education and inquire about the services and resources they have available to school districts.